



Organisation Of Provision to Support Inclusive Education – Inclusion challenges from the Malta Example

Malta Host Team

Focus of Malta study

- To study in-class support, and
- Examine the roles of different personnel in schools/communities

Overview

- Introduction: Data collection
- Welcome to parents and children
- Policy Makers' Support
- Collaborative, holistic, inclusive approach orchestrated by the Head of School
- Curriculum & Assessment for all?
- Individual Educational Planning
- Teacher - LSA support controversies
- Different challenges in Primary and Secondary schools
- Role of Resource Centres

Visit to two typical state schools

Primary School

(St. Ignatius College)

- 268 children 3-10yrs
- 20 (7.5%) with statement of SEN
- 17 LSAs

(One of 68 State Primary schools - and 27 Church and 15 Independent Primary schools).

Boys Secondary School

(Maria Regina College)

- 870 boys 11-16yrs
- 75 (8.6%) with statement of SEN
- 40 LSAs

(One of 30 State Secondary schools, and 21 Church and 14 Independent Secondary schools).

Data collected over two days

Meeting with:

- policy makers and heads of schools
- parents and children with SEN in Primary and secondary
- teachers of primary school
- support staff of primary and secondary schools

Observed two lessons in primary and in secondary

ISSUES raised here for us to continue to reflect on and promote the inclusive education process based on **Visit Report**

ST. IGNATIUS COLLEGE LUQA PRIMARY SCHOOL

School Portal

Welcoming Schools



Mission

Raison d'être

St. Ignatius College Primary Luqa takes its pupils from the kindergarten stage (3-4 years old) right up to the 11+ national benchmark exam. As with all state schools in Malta, our pupils are unstreamed in all years. Our mission is to provide our pupils with all the skills they will need to maximize the benefits they can reap from the holistic education we seek to provide.

Our School's Mission Statement

- ☑ Our principal aim is the holistic education of all our students.
- ☑ To aid children develop to their fullest potential while ensuring they are happy and living challenging lives.
- ☑ To create the correct ethos which will enable us to put this philosophy into practice.
- ☑ To bestow a caring education founded on deep rooted Christian values.
- ☑ To provide the children with the security necessary to enable their full

CLASS WEBSITES

- [Kinder 1.1](#)
- [Kinder 1.2](#)
- [Kinder 1.3](#)
- [Kinder 1.4](#)
- [Kinder 1.5](#)
- [Kinder 2.1](#)
- [Kinder 2.2](#)
- [Kinder 2.3](#)
- [Year 1x](#)
- [Year 1y](#)
- [Year 2x](#)
- [Year 2y](#)
- [Year 3x](#)
- [Year 3y](#)
- [Year 4x](#)
- [Year 4y](#)
- [Year 5x](#)
- [Year 5y](#)

Welcome to parents and children

- Parents are involved in the MAP sessions and in the development of the IEPs.
- Teachers or LSAs write to parents in the communication book every day
- Parents visit the schools and talk to the education and support personnel on a regular basis.
- Parents' information meetings are held on an annual basis in both schools
- Website (primary): 'Apart from the communication book, I really like the school blog on the school website. It is good to see the pictures showing your child being integrated in the school activities'.

Collaborative, holistic, inclusive approach orchestrated by the Head of School

The two schools are typical except maybe in the dedication of the Heads of Schools to inclusive practice:

“It is what I would like all staff to do if these were my very own children.”

“You believe that you can make a difference.”

“Most important is the commitment of educators. We have to work as a group. Support remains the responsibility of the whole school community.”

(Head of Primary School)

This level of commitment to inclusion among heads of school needs to be among selection criteria.

Policy Makers' Support

Strong and clear political leadership and support from the Ministry of Education as well as good co-operation among all the stakeholders involved is considered a key success factor in the whole process of moving towards inclusive practice:

- *'Inclusion is a long process inspired by a rights-based principle, but it is also in our DNA, so no other alternatives considered'* (Inclusive Education Service Manager)

A curriculum for all? Teaching

- The National Minimum Curriculum (1999) had inclusion as its main principle and had national consensus.
- It was a good basis for the development of a National Curriculum Framework (2011) for replacing selective educational arrangements with comprehensive ones, and for developing a National Curriculum that allows for progress for all along a flexible curriculum.

Question:

These have been rather top down changes and teachers remain resistant to take responsibility for the learning of all students, rather than teaching towards one-size-fits-all examinations. How can we change teachers' attitudes and response to needs?

A curriculum for all? Assessment

Primary:

Out of 90 learners with SEN in the 6 primary schools (of one College),

- 10 do not sit for exams – assessed on IEP goals.
- **All encouraged to sit for Benchmark papers – and administrative efforts to make these papers accessible to all learners**

Secondary:

Out of 72 learners with SEN

- 10 do not sit for exams – assessed on IEP goals.
- **5 sit for exam papers at lower levels**

Individual Educational Planning

- This has become a mainstay of communication between school, support personnel and parents of learners with SEN in the two schools.
- Particularly so as in Malta as IEP often preceded by Making Action Plans (MAP) sessions.

Questions:

- IEP is exclusive as making the child different from the rest – IEP should be part of personalised education for all.
- Without monitoring, IEP can also become an official exercise in pen pushing without relation to what happens in classroom.

There is almost one Learning Support Assistant in every classroom in state primary schools



LSA support - controversies

Observed different situations:

- **Lesson One:** learner with support among peers and away from LSA - who was at the back but linked through eye contact; teacher engaged this learner, while LSA also actively supported another two non-statemented learners.
- **Lesson Two:** two LSAs in class; one supporting closely a learner with autism who was kept colouring while the rest did a different lesson (at one time learner showed his picture to peers who showed interest and interacted with learner); other LSA had defying response to his attempt to manage behaviour of a learner with shared support.

Lesson one shows the impact of the new attempt to develop teacher-LSA teamwork.

Lesson two shows the remaining situation of two worlds in the classroom and the importance of selection and training of LSAs and LSA-Teacher teams.

LSA support

Questions

- Does LSA support reduce Teacher responsibility for all children?
 - Saw evidence of increasing examples of effective inclusive teamwork between the teacher and LSA.
 - But evidence of systemic resistance for teachers to take responsibility for all: When a learner has some difficulty coping with regular demands, teachers first solution is to ask for the provision of LSA support.
- Is LSA support meeting the learner's needs to progress in school learning?
- Is the LSA enabling or obstructing the learner's need to interact with peers? (In Secondary school, sometimes learners refuse to have LSA beside them.)

LSA Support Controversies

Our observations and discussions showed that the best LSA support had the same qualities identified by Lacey (2001) about LSAs in the UK:

The most effective LSAs supported groups of pupils rather than individuals, offered just the right amount of support, had time for planning and reporting back to teachers; and felt a valued part of the staff team.

Different challenges in schools for

Primary

Secondary

- Learners like to have individual support.
 - More active teamwork with LSAs noted during class observations.
 - Teachers more closely engaged with learners with SEN: Met teachers with LSAs and support staff.
 - At University, introduced units on responding to diversity and socio-emotional literacy for primary student teachers.
- Learners do not like to have LSA near them.
 - No Teacher-LSA collaboration noted in the class observations.
 - Teachers lack responsibility for learners with SEN: Met the SMT, LSAs and support staff but no teachers.
 - At University, it has been difficult to include training in responding to diversity for secondary student teachers.

Resource Centres

The primary school we visited excluded no one from its community.

- (Malta only has 10 learners of kindergarten and primary level (3-11 yrs) in Resource Centres. Centres still regarded necessary to meet very specialised needs and offer a choice to parents.
- Emphasis on linking these centres to regular schools – a number of learners from regular schools attending for part of the week, and other non-SEN learners from regular schools visiting the Resource Centres).

Question:

- How can resource centres be resource centres?

Inclusion: Long term process

- During the visit and the discussions with the different stakeholders, it was highlighted that inclusion in society and in education has explicitly been on the Maltese national agenda for the past two decades.
- The 1999 National Minimum Curriculum passed unanimously by Parliament had inclusive education as a main principle but reduction of selectivity in system took another decade.
- LSAs initially rejected by teachers.

Question:

How can inclusion be quickened?

Summary

- The example schools are actively engaged in promoting the inclusion of *all* – no exception is made whatever a child's characteristics.

Most promising features appear to be:

- The commitment of the SMT to inclusive education
- The personal engagement with each learner and their family
- The engagement of teachers and peers and support staff in the creation of a welcoming community for all.